



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe  
Auditor-Controller

*John Naimo For*

SUBJECT: **CHILDREN'S GROUP HOME OMBUDSMAN SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT –  
JULY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2013**

This memorandum is to provide you with information about the Auditor-Controller's Children's Group Home Ombudsman (Ombudsman) Program for the period of July 1 through December 31, 2013.

**Background**

The Ombudsman serves as an advocate for children placed in group homes (GH) by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The Ombudsman provides a confidential and informal process to resolve concerns that arise from children residing in GHs. The Ombudsman responds to issues received through a toll-free hotline, via e-mail, and through periodic site visits. The hotline number and e-mail address are advertised on an Ombudsman poster, which is required to be displayed in every County-contracted GH. In addition, during site visits children are encouraged to call the hotline if they need assistance resolving GH problems.

Upon receiving a complaint, the Ombudsman will discuss the issue with the resident or caller, and determine an appropriate course of action. The Ombudsman may contact any party, including DCFS personnel, GH providers, or others, as needed, to gather additional information and suggest a reasonable and fair solution that is within the children's rights and established regulations.

According to the DCFS Child Welfare Services – December 2013 Fact Sheet (located at <http://www.lacdcfs.org/aboutus/factsheets.html>) there are approximately 1,084

Los Angeles County children living in 186 GHs, located both within and outside the County.

### **Summary of Hotline Calls**

Children are encouraged to call the Ombudsman hotline if they need assistance resolving GH problems. During this reporting period, we received a total of 94 calls. For comparison, the Ombudsman hotline received 85 and 72 calls, respectively, in the prior two reporting periods.

Below is a summary of hotline calls:

<b>Personal Rights Concerns</b>	<b>Number of Calls</b>
Allowance	1
Clothing	3
Contact	5
Food	4
Living Conditions	8
Health/Medical, Dental, Psychiatric Care	9
Respect	6
School and Community	1
Subtotal	37
<b>Personal Concerns</b>	
Discipline	2
Drug Testing	1
Fear, Threats, or Intimidation	2
Gang Related	1
Isolation	1
Physical Harm	3
Privacy	1
Sexual Abuse	1
Subtotal	12
<b>"Other" Concerns</b>	
Issues with/Need to Contact Social Worker	12
Siblings	1
Subtotal	13
<b>All Concerns Above – Total</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>GH-related General Information Calls –Total</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Non-GH related General Information Calls – Total</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>94</b>

Within the purview of the Ombudsman, all 62 calls for personal rights concerns, personal concerns, and “other” concerns were resolved through communication and/or referrals to DCFS’ Children’s Social Workers, Child Protection Hotline, Out-of-Home Care Management Division, Public Inquiry and Youth Development Ombudsman; Probation Department Ombudsman; Community Care Licensing; and GH staff/management. In addition, all 32 callers seeking general information (13 GH and 19 non-GH related) received an answer, or were redirected to the appropriate party. Also, two e-mails were received during this period requesting assistance.

During this reporting period, we received calls from or pertaining to the following GHs:

<b>Group Home</b>	<b>Supervisory District / Out of County</b>	<b>Number of Calls</b>
Casa Esperanza Treatment Center	1	1
St. Anne’s Maternity Home	1	3
Trinity Youth Services (Probation) – El Monte	1	3
Penny Lane	2	11*
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services	2	3
Children’s Homes of Southern California	3	1
Los Angeles Youth Network	3	1
Project Six	3	1
Wallis Annenberg Center / Aviva	3	1
Orange County Children’s Foundation in Torrance	4	1
Children Are Our Future	5	1
David and Margaret Youth and Family Services	5	11*
Five Acres	5	2
Macro Homes, Inc.	5	4
McKinley Children’s Center	5	6
Murrell’s Farm Boys Home	5	1
Rosemary Children’s Services	5	6
Turmont Home for Girls	5	1
Florence Crittenton Services for Children and Families	Orange County	10**
Mary’s Shelter Dependent Program	Orange County	4
Trinity Youth Services (Probation) – Apple Valley	San Bernardino County	3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>

\*Calls were for “Issues with/Need to Contact Social Worker” (4 from Penny Lane and 5 from David and Margaret)

\*\*6 calls received were from the same Probation youth who was referred to the Probation Ombudsman

The following are examples of Ombudsman hotline calls received:

- A youth alleged that he had not been taken to go back-to-school clothes shopping and school was starting soon. The Ombudsman spoke with the GH staff and was informed about the back-to-school shopping process for the residents. The caller was scheduled to go shopping; however, money was pending from his Social Worker. This information was communicated to the youth and he understood. The GH manager expressed to the youth and the Ombudsman that he was pleased the youth called the Ombudsman hotline to verbally express his concern instead of getting angry and acting out. The youth ultimately was taken shopping.
- A youth alleged that the GH staff would not take her to the dentist or take her to pick up her glasses. Coincidentally, the Ombudsman was scheduled to do an outreach visit to that GH the same afternoon the call was received. Prior to the visit, the Ombudsman spoke with the GH's Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and informed her of the call. Information was shared that the youth was threatening to go absent without official leave and harm herself. Once we arrived at the GH, we spoke with the youth along with the LCSW. The youth expressed her concerns about the dentist and glasses and it was explained to her that the dentist appointment was rescheduled in her best interest until she felt better. In addition, while we were talking to the youth, a staff person delivered her new glasses. The LCSW assigned staff to be with the youth one-on-one until she felt better. The youth was receptive to the one-on-one supervision and was happy the Ombudsman came out, and for the support by the LCSW. The youth was taken to the dentist at a later date.

### **Outreach**

One of the Ombudsman's responsibilities is to visit GHs, and provide DCFS children and GH staff with information about the Ombudsman function. Recent DCFS GH monitoring reports are reviewed, and visits are prioritized based on concerns reported by residents or information obtained from the Sybil Brand Commission and DCFS Special Audit Committee meetings. In addition, calls received from GH residents may trigger additional announced or unannounced visits.

During this reporting period, the Ombudsman visited 56 GHs, including some providers with multiple sites. This is a 100% increase from the 28 site visits made during the last reporting period, and reflects our increased emphasis on client outreach. The Ombudsman provided 168 DCFS-placed children with information about the available services through verbal presentations and flyers/brochures. During these visits, GH residents had the opportunity to ask questions and share their concerns. If needed, the Ombudsman looked into their issues, and followed up with the residents.

The following GHs were visited:

<b>Group Home</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Site Visit Location(s)</b>	<b>Supervisory District(s) / Out of County</b>
Garces Residential Care Services dba Bright Horizons	1	Claremont	5
Careprovider Children and Family Services	2	Covina and West Covina	5
Children Are Our Future	7	Chatsworth	3
Children's Homes of Southern California	5	Reseda, Van Nuys, and West Hills	3
Counseling and Research Associate – Masada Home	2	Gardena	4
Fleming and Barnes, Dimondale Adolescent	2	Carson and Lancaster	2, 5
Dangerfield Institute of Urban Problems – Dangerfield	3	Los Angeles	2
Fields Comprehensive Youth Services	2	Rancho Cucamonga and Upland	San Bernardino County
Five Acres – Solita Group Home	1	Pasadena	5
Heritage Group Homes, Inc.	5	La Verne, Phillips Ranch, West Covina, Whittier, and Valinda	1, 4, 5
Human Services Network	3	Granada Hills, North Hills, and Shadow Hills	3, 5
Leroy Haynes Center for Children and Family Services	1	La Verne	5
Luvlee's Residential Care/New Dawn	2	Walnut and Chino	1, San Bernardino County
Macros Homes, Inc.	1	Lancaster	5
Mary's Shelter Dependent Program	2	Santa Ana	Orange County
Murrell's Farm Boys Home	2	Lancaster	5
Olive Crest Treatment Centers, Inc.	1	Bellflower	4
Phoenix Houses of L.A. Inc.	1	Lake Terrace	3

<b>Group Home</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Site Visit Location(s)</b>	<b>Supervisory District(s) / Out of County</b>
Rosemary Children's Services	5	Pasadena	5
San Gabriel Children's Center, Inc./ RTI	4	Covina	5
T & T Home for Boys	1	Carson	2
Turmont Home for Boys	2	Carson, Lancaster	2, 5
Vista Del Mar	1	Los Angeles	3
Total	56		

### **Conclusion**

During the next reporting period, GH visits will continue. We will also continue to enhance our communication with DCFS, the Probation Department, GH providers, and other agencies to resolve concerns brought to our attention. In addition, an updated Ombudsman web page (<http://onlineapps.auditor.lacounty.gov/ombudsman/>) was launched and can also be found on the Auditor-Controller's Internet site under Links of Interest. The Chief Executive Office's Graphic Arts Section is finalizing new Ombudsman posters. The new posters are more eye-catching and appealing to youth. The multiple designs will allow for a variety to be distributed to GHs. These enhancements will continue to promote the Ombudsman Program.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call me or your staff may contact Michelle Day, Children's Group Home Ombudsman, at (213) 893-0551 or via e-mail at [mday@auditor.lacounty.gov](mailto:mday@auditor.lacounty.gov).

WLW:RGC:GZ:LTM:md

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Children's Deputies  
Audit Committee  
Public Information Office  
Probation Group Home Ombudsman  
DCFS Out-of-Home Care Management Division  
Commission for Children and Families  
Sybil Brand Commission  
Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection